

HEALTHY OUTCOMES



Season's Greetings!

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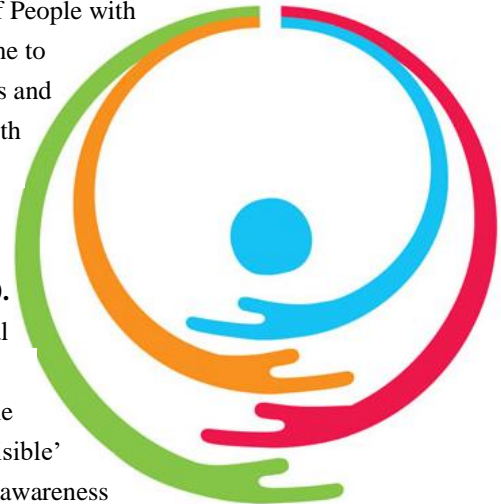
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December 3, 2020

International Day of People with Disabilities

International Day of People with Disabilities is a special time to celebrate the achievements and contributions of people with disability and increase public awareness, understanding and acceptance. #IDPD or #IDPD2020.

This year during the annual celebration of people with disabilities, the 2020 theme 'Not all Disabilities are Visible' also focuses on spreading awareness and understanding of disabilities that are not immediately apparent, such as mental illness, chronic pain or fatigue, sight or hearing impairments, diabetes, brain injuries, neurological disorders, learning differences and cognitive dysfunctions, among others. ■



New Year? Yes, please. Cheers to better times ahead in 2021. Wishing you a very happy holiday and a safe and healthy New Year!



The HCQU works with intellectual disabilities and behavioral health programs in Central PA to provide health care management services for adults with Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities or Autism. Our goal is that all people living in PA, regardless of ability, receive the finest community services available – assuring that they are as healthy as possible and can fully participate in community life. The HCQU works to enhance access to community physical and mental health care through **FREE** education, public health outreach, advocacy and empowerment as well as to improve health care outcomes. Serving the following counties: Blair, Centre, Columbia/Montour/Snyder/Union, Huntingdon/Mifflin/Juniata, Lycoming/Clinton, Northumberland and Schuylkill.

The information offered in this newsletter is to increase your awareness of health-related situations. It is not intended to be a substitute for professional medical advice. If you believe you or someone you support has a condition, please seek the advice of a physician.

A Hidden Holiday Hazard – Choking

The holidays bring an abundance of joy, good company and festivities. It's the most wonderful time of the year and it's also when we spend more time eating, drinking and being merry. Unfortunately, the holidays pose more choking hazards than at any other time of the year. Choking is when food or other items become lodged in the back of a person's throat causing a blockage of a person's airway. This blockage prevents air from entering the lungs depriving the body of the necessary oxygen needs. This can quickly lead to irreversible brain damage and death. Choking can happen to anyone at any age and is a medical emergency.

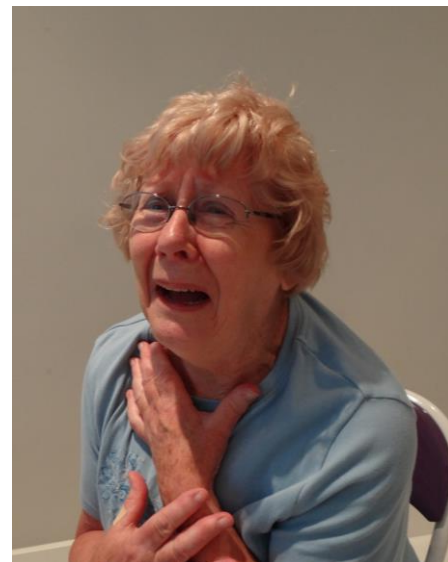
Often, we get so wrapped up in the gift giving and social events that we forget to focus on safety precautions when it comes to choking. Taking precautions to prevent choking can be quite simple but often it's not on our holiday to do list. A little extra attention can go a long way in preventing emergencies.

Holiday parties mean hearty laughs, sampling tasty treats and consuming adult beverages. Eating and drinking while standing and juggling a plate of food with a beverage can set the stage for a choking incident. Be sure to eat slowly, chew your food thoroughly and drink in moderation.

You may have a variety of people seated at your table this year...socially distanced of course. Those present may range from infants to the elderly. They may be your relatives, friends, guests or someone

you provide care to. Each group has some risk factors that increase the chances of choking on foods and other liquids. Being aware of potential risks can be lifesaving. Choking is unexpected and happens easier than you think.

In adults, the most common cause of choking is talking while eating. Little tykes can choke on pieces of food and nonfood items like small toys and decorations. The football game on in the next room might be just enough distraction for someone to rush through their meal too quickly and not chew their food well enough. Grandma or grandpa may have dental issues or dentures. Ill-fitting dentures and difficulty chewing tougher food textures can increase the chance of choking. Older adults with neurological problems, like stroke or dementia, also have a higher chance of choking or getting food stuck because of difficulty chewing and swallowing. Keep in mind, certain medicines can also prevent making enough saliva to help easily move food down. Uncle Eddie may have swallowing difficulties that require feeding assistance and a special diet. Betty may be a first-time guest who has a food allergy that you are not aware of. Suddenly if an alert individual begins to choke and is unable to cough, speak or breathe, immediately begin First Aid and have someone else call 911 at the same time. If the individual is unconscious, call 911 if this has not already been done and begin First Aid/CPR care for an unconscious choking individual.



So, as you prepare for an enjoyable holiday season remember to do so safely. Many injuries can be prevented with some planning, preparation and a little extra caution. Be mindful of your guests needs, be aware of your surroundings and watch for any signs or symptoms of distress in those around you. Learn CPR and First Aid so you can help someone who becomes ill or injured until more advanced medical treatment arrives. Knowing how to quickly respond is critical when it comes to medical emergencies.

For more information on choking and how to learn how to save a life, visit the American Heart Association Guidelines for CPR and Emergency Cardiovascular at heart.org. Learn First Aid/CPR from the American Red Cross. Visit www.redcross.org.

Contact the HCQU for a virtual training or self-study packet on **Choking is an Emergency**.

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What's Happening Now Face to Face Operations on Pause

With the health and safety of our community paramount to our concerns, we are announcing a significant change to our previous service delivery platform. It is necessary for us to take additional precautions to minimize risk to everyone so all face to face operations have been paused. COVID -19 has not changed the need for education and support-if anything it has expanded the need. Our team will continue to provide individuals and staff training and technical assistance to the maximum extent possible during the pandemic, while adjusting delivery methods to comply with state and local health/safety restrictions. Until further notice, HCQU RN staff will be **facilitating instructor led virtual trainings** in substitution for all face to face interactions. The newest available instructor-led virtual training is titled [Online Training and Meeting Manners](#). This is a basic training discussing the Do's and Don'ts when participating in a virtual session.

In addition, self-study packets and online education courses are available. We remain committed to providing services with the safety and welfare of our individuals and staff as a top priority. Contact the HCQU to discuss your training needs and how to schedule remote learning sessions. ■

Staying apart, together

(Complete article: <https://www.geisinger.org/health-and-wellness/wellness-articles/2020/05/28/16/49/social-distancing-still-important>)

Dr. Allison Brodgerski, director of infectious diseases in Geisinger's northeast region reminds everyone that "the virus is still here and that cases are on the rise. There's more work to do."

One of the best ways to reduce the spread of the virus is by continuing to practice social distancing. Here's a refresher:

- Stay at least 6 feet away from others
- Always wear a face mask when in public
- Avoid gathering in groups (small or large)
- Limit time spent in crowded places, like grocery stores

"We understand that it's hard to be physically apart from your loved ones," adds Dr. Brodgerski. "But since this virus mainly spreads from person-to-person, we need to take measures to help keep ourselves and others safe."

Some ways Dr. Brodgerski recommends to safely stay connected include video chats, video games, virtual game and movie nights, phone calls, text messaging, social media, hiking and going for walks outdoors.

Staying connected can help us relieve some of the stress brought on by the pandemic. For mental health resources for COVID-19 visit <https://www.geisinger.org/patient-care/conditions-treatments-specialty/mental-health-resources>.

The toll-free, round-the-clock support line for people having issues/struggles with the pandemic is available. The number to call is 1-855-284-2494. For TTY, dial 724-631-5600. The Department of Human Services (DHS) today announced the launch of a statewide Support & Referral Helpline staffed by skilled and compassionate staff who will be available 24/7 to assist Pennsylvanians struggling with anxiety and other challenging emotions due to the COVID-19 emergency and refer them to community-based resources that can further help to meet individual needs. ■



HOW CAN I PROTECT MYSELF FROM COVID-19?
PRACTICE GOOD HEALTH HABITS

- WASH YOUR HANDS OFTEN
- COVER COUGHS + SNEEZES
- DON'T TOUCH EYES/NOSE/MOUTH
- CLEAN SURFACES FREQUENTLY
- STAY HOME WHEN SICK
- AVOID SICK PEOPLE

pennsylvania
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

App Allows for Real Time Contact Tracing in Pennsylvania

DANVILLE, Pa. – Geisinger is encouraging Pennsylvania residents to download and use the COVID Alert PA smartphone app launched last month by the Pennsylvania Department of Health.

The free app available for Apple and Android devices, alerts users if they have been exposed to someone who has tested positive for COVID-19. Users who receive an exposure alert can choose whether they want to receive a call from a contact tracer, and can track their symptoms through the app. The COVID Alert PA app quickly notifies users who may have been exposed to COVID-19, preventing outbreaks and keeping our communities safe.

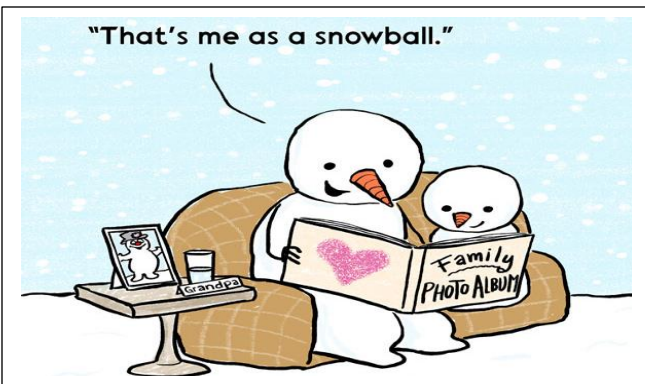
For more information about the COVID Alert PA app, visit www.pa.gov/covid/covid-alert-pa ■



HCQU News:

NOTICE!!!

Due to the remote working status of the Central PA HCQU, all completed Referral Forms requesting training or technical assistance **should be emailed** to the appropriate HCQU nurse. *Please do not fax referrals.* There is no change to the Blair County referral process.



A Hidden Holiday Hazard - Choking...

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Choking cuts off oxygen to the brain. Know how to recognize a choking individual and give first aid as quickly as possible. The universal sign for choking is hands clutched to the throat. If the person doesn't give the signal, look for these indications:

- ❖ Inability to talk -- ASK- "Are you choking?"
- ❖ Difficulty breathing or noisy breathing
- ❖ Squeaky sounds when trying to breathe
- ❖ Cough, which may either be weak or forceful
- ❖ Skin, lips and nails turning blue or dusky
- ❖ Skin that is flushed, then turns pale or bluish in color
- ❖ Loss of consciousness

If the person is able to cough forcefully, the person should keep coughing. If the person is choking and can't talk, cry or laugh forcefully and you're the only person present, begin first aid before calling 911. If another person is available, have that person call for help while you perform first aid. ■



UNSCRAMBLE THE WORDS

Test your knowledge and see how words related to choking you can unscramble:

EXSUTTER _____

KINGCHO _____

MATTERENT _____

WECH _____

CLOKEBAG _____

FILMUND _____

GALLOWWINS _____

PERTANCIOUS _____

SUCCOUNIONS _____

EVERBAGE _____

IGNATE _____

BARTHEE _____

ANSWERS TO WORD SCRAMBLE:

Textures, Choking, Treatment, Chew, Blockage, Mindful, Swallowing, Precautions, Unconscious, Beverage, Eating, Breathe

Online Course Updates

The HCQU offers educational online courses for anyone who is interested in learning more information on different health care issues. Each completed course allows you to receive 0.5 hour of credit towards your annual human services training requirement.

Presently the online course page is performing intermittent upgrade maintenance. This will occur over an extended period. Select courses may be temporarily unavailable. Don't let this maintenance stop you from visiting our webpage for new and improved courses. **In fact, the Coronavirus (COVID-19) course has recently been updated.** ALL listed online courses are available in self-study format and virtual training by request. Self-studying involves studying without direct supervision at your own comfortable pace. If you have any questions or training requests, please contact your regional HCQU nurse or Kristy Campbell at kacampbell@geisinger.edu.

Visit <http://www.geisinger.org/hcqu> to view available courses. Click on "Take an Online Course" which is located on the navigation bar on the left. Then click on the link "listing of the available online courses." ■

Cooking Corner

5-Ingredient Peppermint Bark

- 8 oz semisweet chocolate, broken into pieces
- 2 teaspoons canola oil, divided
- ½ teaspoon peppermint extract, divided
- 8 oz white chocolate, broken into pieces
- 25 peppermint candies, crushed

Lightly grease a 9x9 inch pan and line with waxed paper, smoothing out wrinkles; set aside.

Place the semisweet chocolate and 1 teaspoon of the canola oil in the top of a double boiler over just barely simmering water, stirring frequently and scraping down the sides with a rubber spatula to avoid scorching. When the chocolate is melted, stir in 1/4 teaspoon of the peppermint extract. Pour the melted chocolate into the prepared pan and spread evenly over the bottom of the pan. Sprinkle half of the crushed peppermints over the chocolate layer. Refrigerate until completely hardened, about 1 hour.

Place the white chocolate and the remaining 1 teaspoon canola oil in the top of a double boiler over just barely simmering water, stirring frequently and scraping down the sides with a rubber spatula to avoid scorching. When the chocolate is melted, stir in the remaining 1/4 teaspoon peppermint extract. Pour the white chocolate directly over the semisweet chocolate layer; spread evenly. Sprinkle the remaining crushed candy over the top and gently press in. Refrigerate until completely hardened. Remove from pan; break into small pieces to serve.



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